

Valérie Igounet : *Histoire du négationnisme en France*

Robert Faurisson

5 May 2000

Valérie IGOUNET, *Histoire du négationnisme en France* ("History of negationism in France), Paris, Le Seuil, March 2000, 692 p.

If there existed, as is said, a system of justice equal for all, then Valérie Igounet and the director of the publishing house Les éditions du Seuil would find themselves seated together on the hard bench reserved for the defendants in the 17th chamber of the Paris criminal court [1](#)

. And as will be seen further on Jean-Claude Pressac could keep them company. V. Igounet's book, *Histoire du négationnisme en France* ("History of Holocaust Denial in France"), is obviously inspired by antirevisionism but, paradoxically and in spite of its stated aims, this fat 700-page volume can be read as a manual of initiation to the revisionist case on Second World War history. There are extracts galore from revisionist works. The French-based LICRA ("International League against Racism and Antisemitism") and MRAP ("Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples"), along with the various Jewish organisations, could well find grounds therein for denouncing a form of "questioning the existence of crimes against humanity", in the sense meant by the Fabius-Gayssot Act of 13 July 1990.

V. Igounet's own contribution

V. Igounet, born in 1970, holds a doctorate in history from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris. Her book is, we are told, nothing other than an adaptation of her thesis, written under the direction of Pierre Milza. Disorder reigns within and the outline is a charade with, in particular, at the end, a ludicrous development on "post-revisionism". Teeming with rumours and gossip about such or such personality, the book contains a glut of rather simplistic political and moral considerations. Nothing need be said of the mistakes which bear witness to an often hasty gathering of information. Finally, in the main, this compilation exercise stops at the beginning of the Garaudy/Abbé Pierre affair, in 1996. One point will not fail to surprise the cognoscenti: the author, who is on good terms with the anti-revisionist Jacques Baynac and who quotes him frequently in her book, completely overlooks his two extraordinary articles which appeared in the Lausanne (Switzerland) *Nouveau Quotidien* on 2 and 3 September 1996. In those pieces, J. Baynac had ended up admitting, though seething with anger, that there was, quite frankly, no known evidence of the Nazi gas chambers' existence. Why has V. Igounet passed over in silence so noteworthy an element in the history of revisionism in France? J. Baynac is a French historian and has devoted a substantial part of his energy to fighting such French revisionists as Pierre Guillaume, Serge Thion and Robert Faurisson. I have written to V. Igounet asking her to give me the reasons for this silence. I have received no answer. In closing as far as she is concerned, I will say in her favour that, of all those who have published books or articles against revisionism, she is perhaps the only author who seems to pay heed, at times, to scholarly rectitude.

Jean-Claude Pressac's contribution

The last forty pages of the book contain an "interview with Jean-Claude Pressac." I recommend this to the reader. Never has anyone in the extermination camp gone so far in what seems nearly a repudiation of the orthodox cause. Jean Pierre-Bloch is denounced for his "hysterical statements" about the revisionists (p. 623). At Auschwitz, at the start of his on-site investigation, J.-C. Pressac began "to obtain results which were at variance with the Communist history of the camp" (p. 625). He deplores "a farrago of testimonies, unusable because lacking in historical alertness" (p. 627). In regard to Serge Klarsfeld, he voices "reservations about his activity, reservations which were to become stronger and stronger over the years" (p. 634). In the anti-revisionist law of 1990, he sees a "reactionary Communist idiocy" (p. 638). He accuses Pierre Vidal-Naquet of being, on the subject of the number of Hungarian Jews deported during the war, among those "who know nothing about it" (p. 641). Danuta Czech, speaking for the Auschwitz State Museum, is found "guilty of historical fakery" (p. 643). The accounts of Georges Wellers "are no longer worth anything, which does not stop the Poles from using [his] faulty results as a 'serious' reference" (p. 644). P. Vidal-Naquet that man again behaves "hypocritically" and can at times be "lamentable and useless" (p. 646); he "may be compared to a hollow weather vane spinning in the wind of publications and current events because he himself has not undertaken any basic research upon which to support his peremptory and moralistic declarations" (p. 647). Moving along in stride, J.-C. Pressac reminds us that, contrary to so many alleged eyewitness accounts of the thick smoke of the crematoria, "the Topf incineration ovens gave off no smoke, and neither did those of the competing firms []. Certain photographs of the euthanasia centres under the control of the T4 action show them with a profusion of smoke rising into the sky and purportedly proving that the corpses of recently killed mental patients were being burned inside. These are crude photographic forgeries" (p. 648). In former times J.-C. Pressac used to set great store by the drawings of the alleged eyewitness David Olère; it is worth seeing how he reveals to us here the secret of this "witness's" hoaxes (p. 649-650). The end of the Pressac interview is of plainly revisionist inspiration. Reading it one sees that, for him, the dossier on the concentration camp system is nothing less than "rotten" ("pourri"). The word is that of the late historian Michel de Boüard, a wartime deportee whose intercession in 1986 on behalf of the revisionist Henri Roques had caused

something of a stir. J.-C. Pressac acknowledges his authorship of that remark and adds :

Can things be put right? It is too late. A general rectification is humanly and materially impossible []. New documents will inevitably emerge and disrupt the official certainties more and more. The present version of the camp world, though triumphant, is doomed. What will be salvaged? Little (p. 652).

In the opinion of J.-C. Pressac, we have before us an enormous lie, which, for his part, he imputes to the Communists. In this interview, he also attacks the revisionists, yet with them it is not very clear what, of any gravity, he can find fault; indeed it is for the upholders of the orthodox view that he keeps his sharpest gibes.

The closing words of the interview, which, as it happens, are also the closing words of V. Igounet's book, evoke the "wastebins of History". For whom or for what are these wastebins reserved? For the writings of the revisionists or, as is said here, the "negationists"? Not at all! They are reserved for the "rotten" dossier of concentration camp history in which, according to S. Klarsfeld's former recruit, more care has been taken to defend the lies than to establish the facts.

P. Vidal-Naquet's presentation of the book

On the front page of *Le Monde's* literary supplement of 24 March 2000 there appeared, under the by-line of P. Vidal-Naquet, a long review, covering six columns and accompanied by an illustration, of V. Igounet's work: its title was "Histoire d'une négation". P. Vidal-Naquet had been on the jury which heard the author's viva. Under the guise of a review, he above all tries to settle the score with his colleague Robert Faurisson, who has always haunted him, and with J.-C. Pressac, his new *bête noire*. The former, mentioned by name twelve times, is presented as "an anti-Semitic clown" who revels in lies:

In the presence of the lie of which Faurisson is the purest expression, one feels a kind of peculiarly philosophical giddiness.

V. Igounet's book was supposed to carry the text of an interview which she had obtained from the "liar" but an antiracist group, whose name is kept hidden from us, opposed its publication:

In the name of the Gayssot Act, an antiracist group threatened the editor with blackmail and the Faurisson text vanished. I deplore this all the more as nobody demolishes Faurisson better than Faurisson himself, provided one knows how to read him.

J.-C. Pressac is judged with almost as much harshness and contempt:

In his writings, the victims disappear, the genocide never existed; there remains a mere technical problem which he believes to have solved. As for those who do not follow him in all his variations, they are kindly referred to as "weather vanes", [a remark] which, coming from him, must be a compliment. As for the eyewitness accounts which do not square with his demonstrations, he consigns them out of hand to the "wastebins of history". They are, I am sure, much obliged.

My "Rights of reply"

I have, unsuccessfully, attempted to exercise my right of reply to this article where, named a dozen times, I am called a liar but am not shown any evidence of a single lie. Through its solicitors Messrs Baudelot and Cohen, *Le Monde* has refused to recognise my right. I have had hardly more luck with V. Igounet who, before coming out with her book, had published in the monthly *L'Histoire* a rather long study entitled "Le cas Faurisson : itinéraire d'un négationniste" (p. 72-77). In a subsequent issue of that magazine my reply was printed but, contrary to the relevant law, half of it was cut out by way of five separate deletions, none of which was indicated to the reader (*L'Histoire*, February 2000, p. 4). Still better, this semblance of a reply was followed by remarks from the editor condemning "the fantasies of the assassins of remembrance". As for the text of the interview which I had given to V. Igounet on 9 April 1996, the reader will find it below.

1 The section which specialises in both civil and criminal proceedings involving the press in particular and public expression in general [translator's note].

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French text in *Etudes révisionnistes*, vol. 1, 2000, p. 139-143.

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